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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0047  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 001975

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2017

TAGS: PREL PINR KN GT

SUBJECT: GUATEMALA ESTABLISHES DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH  
NORTH KOREA

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires David E. Lindwall for reasons 1.4 (b&d).

¶1. (C) On October 1, Vice Foreign Minister Luis Fernando Andrade confirmed to Pol/Econ Couns that the Government of Guatemala had established diplomatic relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Sept. 26, 2007, on the margins of the UN General Assembly. The formal agreement was signed by Guatemalan FonMin Gert Rosenthal and North Korean VFM Choc Su Hon. Andrade said Guatemala's ambassador in Seoul would also be accredited to Pyongyang; no new embassy would be opened. Asked about Guatemala's agenda with North Korea, Andrade said there were no points of specific interest. Rather, the move was intended to expand Guatemala's diplomatic horizons.

¶2. (C) Comment. FonMin Rosenthal at times accepts his staff's recommendations without critical review. We suspect that VFM Andrade, who accompanied Rosenthal to the UNGA, encouraged this step. Andrade's approach to the conduct of Guatemala's diplomatic relations seems to be one of unfocused activism. Whether trying to use Haiti as a vehicle to foment U.S.-Cuba rapprochement, or proposing that Guatemala -- together with the PRC and Egypt -- lead a new, global "Encounter of Civilizations," Andrade is eager to see Guatemala punch above its diplomatic weight via new avenues of outreach. Andrade will likely leave his current position following the inauguration of a new government on January 14. In the meantime, he appears to have squeezed in a new relationship with North Korea.

Lindwall